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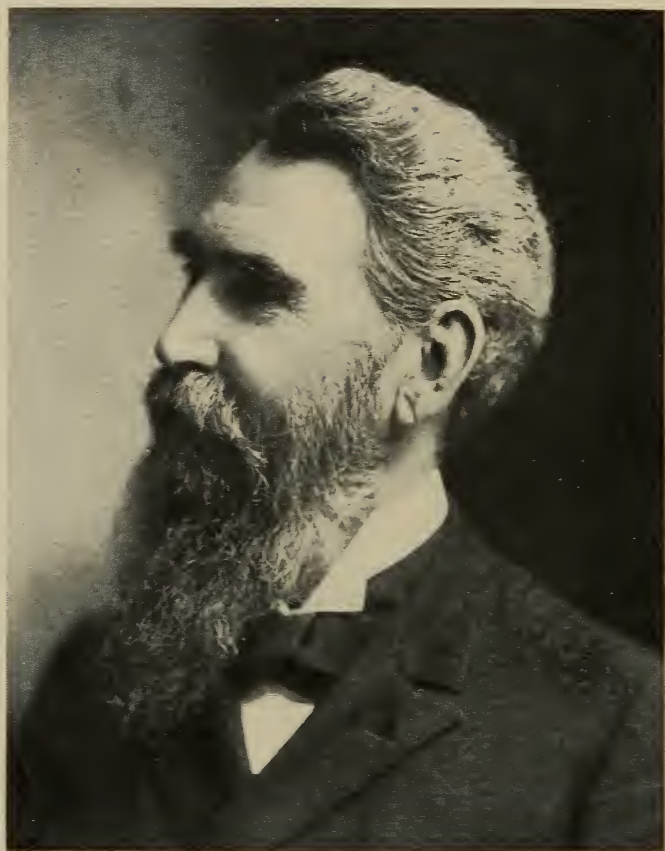


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JAMES PHILIP EAGLE.

SPIRITUAL FARMING

By J. F. LOVE

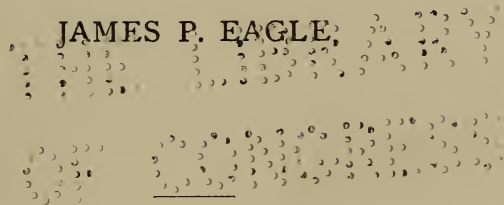


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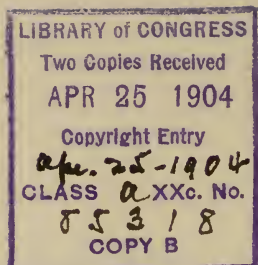
AN INTRODUCTION

BY

JAMES P. EAGLE,



SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
NASHVILLE, TENN.



DEDICATION.

To that ancient order, The Honorable Knights of the Plow-handle and the Hoe-handle, who, more than any other class of American citizens, by their intrepidity, subdued this continent; by their patriotism established our liberties; by their industry now furnish the nation its staff of life; and whose future task it is to exemplify purity in religion, simplicity in worship, and continue to be a plant-bed from which the pulpit, the college, and the professions may draw their supplies, this little volume is, with a thousand grateful memories of the farm and its hard but noble toil, dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

The following pages are the written forms of spoken discourses delivered to my church and congregation in Wadesboro, North Carolina, while I was their happy pastor. In publishing these talks I do not yield to anybody's request for their publication; but I do act on the suggestion of friends, and with the hope that these pages may prove to be fruitful seed from which, in time to come, a spiritual harvest may be gathered. We are grateful for having what we have written introduced by our brother, Ex-Governor Eagle, whose vocation is that of an eminently successful farmer, and whose irreproachable Christian character and ripe Christian experience exemplify the best products of spiritual agriculture.

JAMES F. LOVE.

Little Rock, Ark., March 10, 1904.

INTRODUCTION.

The Old and the New Testament Scriptures abound with illustrations drawn from the various agricultural pursuits which most beautifully and forcefully set forth Christianity and its growth. The Savior himself drew many of His most striking parables from the everyday experiences of the tillers of the soil. It is remarkable how sparingly the preachers of the present day use these very apt illustrations of great truths and fundamental principles in their sermons and their articles published in our religious papers. It is still more remarkable when we call to mind that the majority of our ministers were reared in the country on the farm, and are experimentally acquainted with every phase of farming, from clearing and fencing the land to harvesting the crop. A very large and influential portion of the Lord's people are farmers who would, no doubt, derive both pleasure and profit from hearing sermons and readings articles in the papers which present Bible truths in figures with which they are familiar. They are Bi-

ble readers; and many of them read our denominational papers.

The author of this little book has, in a clear and pleasing style, presented a number of these figures and has emphasized the truths they are intended to teach.

The thoughtful Christian reader, whether agriculturist or not, will, by following the author of these pages and meditating on the truths he teaches, be greatly helped and strengthened in Christian faith and work, and lead on to greater heights of Christian usefulness and joy.

JAMES P. EAGLE.

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BREAKING THE LAND



“Break up your fallow grounds, and sow not among thorns.” *The Bible.*

“The works of God are the shepherd’s calendar and the plowman’s almanac.” *Anon.*

“What battles the plowboys have fought in dreams! What orations they have pronounced! What reforms achieved! What tools invented! What books written! What business reared.” *Hillis.*

SPIRITUAL FARMING.

PART I.—BREAKING THE LAND.

How full of spiritual suggestion are the fields! Nowhere do men live closer to the heart of things than in plantation life, and to no one more than to the discerning farmer does day unto day utter speech and night unto night show knowledge. Spring-time and autumn preach so plainly of God's wisdom and of the soul's seasons and opportunities! These sons of toil who rise early and walk abroad over ample acres see

“Tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything,”

if they carry with them spiritual vision and a devout soul.

The preachers of righteousness who speak to us in the Word glean many of their illustrations and similes from the fields. The Scriptures abound in figures and types from the hills and the meadows. The smell of the fresh earth, the odor of the wild flowers, and the bracing air of the country pervade the

Book. Religious truth is there taught in the familiar speech of the farmer. Our present theme is one of the most suggestive of agricultural symbols. "Break up your fallow grounds and sow not among thorns."

Fallow ground is land which was once broken but has been neglected until it has grown over again with weeds, briars, etc. Such land is made a type of the moral and spiritual condition of Israel. It is also a lively figure of certain classes among us to-day. Some man was once aroused on the subject of religion, but failing to act soon became cold and indifferent. Some faithful man of God declared a message which set truth in a new light and made him feel new moral sensations. He saw deeper into his heart's depravity than ever before. Perhaps he realized that he was already a victim to some enslaving habit. Or he saw Jesus in such incomparable loveliness and ineffable sweetness as never before. But he would not act and the vision faded, the blessed emotion subsided, the soul fell into its old chill of indifference and old and new sins took root and put forth their noxious branches. The man of God has gone his way and that soul is fallow ground.

Another is represented here. He was aroused to momentary action in time of revival, or under providential affliction, he was convicted of sin and confessed it; saw Christ to be his only hope, and professed his faith in Him. He was numbered among the converts. Then the doors of the church were opened and others, friends and companions, entered her sacred communion and gratefully took her vows; but he hesitated, postponed obedience, fell into temptation, then doubted his conversion, and finally decided not to join the church. He has since had no peace or joy, and now knows that he is not fit to participate in Christian fellowship. His soul is sodden and the precious seeds of truth are "choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit to perfection."

Others have even joined the church, obeying the primary commands to repent and be baptized, but have failed to carry the principle of obedience into the whole course of their lives and apply it to service and benevolence. This class, all too numerous, keep the ordinances but disobey the subsequent orders of Christ. They are sound in doctrine but not in doing. These baptized drones remind us of the reply made by the little boy who fell

out of bed in his sleep and hurt himself. His father picked him up and asked him how it happened. "I went to sleep too near the place where I got in," sobbed the little sufferer. How many children of the church do this! They seem to mistake the church for a spiritual dormitory. "Awake! Awake!" is a call which reverberates through the Holy Book, and should be echoed from all of our pulpits.

CLEAR THE LAND.

This is the first work to be done in fallow ground. The farmer would not begin his spring time work by planting his corn in the hard soil and among the brushes and briars. There is much clearing and deep plowing to be done before the time comes for planting. The natural man and the backslidden believer present a moral soil which is both hard and grown over with many things hostile to spiritual graces. The land must be prepared or the good plants of the kingdom will be choked.

In some lives a rank growth of pride must be cut down. Self-esteem grows tall in the unregenerate heart, grows rapidly in an awakened but unconverted nature, and some of the most luxuriant growths are to be found in the

lives of backsliders. No one has yet made a catalogue of all the varieties of this exotic plant. Some people are too proud of their families to become humble and congenial Christians. They are the De Stanhopes of the society of attenuated pedigrees. Some are puffed up with social pride, some are purse-proud, with some it is pride of intellect—not intellectual pride. These are sometimes called high-minded, but the botanical name for this variety of moral vegetation is *vacuus mentis*, which, in the better language of the farmer, is empty-pated. To these and all others of a proud heart the Word speaks with plainness: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up." Pride is a cardinal sin because growing so tall it shades the moral nature and renders it barren of the lowlier, gentler, and more beautiful graces; besides many plants even fouler than itself flourish under its shadow.

The stumps of evil habit must be dug up. Some of the richest soil is where the stoutest stumps stand. Evil habits are like stumps because they are hard to uproot and because other trees of their kind sprout from them. Most sins spring from some original stock and few sins appear singly. Sin multiplies

from habit even as many shoots spring from the same stump. The destruction of the stump is the only effectual remedy. Reformation alone fails of complete results because reformation only prunes the tree or cuts away the sprouts from the stumps of evil habit. The old sinful acts will soon appear again. The wise tiller of the soil of his moral nature will not plant among these stumps of evil habit.

The roots of selfishness must be grubbed up. This work is painful in its process but absolutely necessary and is of great benefit in making farming easy and the harvest large. Sometimes the roots of selfishness are set in a man's love of money. A little grubbing about the pocket-book shocks him painfully. A very little ministerial grubbing with a keen-edged Scripture text aggravates him sorely. Sometimes the roots of selfishness are set in self-ease, and a sermon from such a passage as "Work out your own salvation," or "Why stand ye here idle all the day?" is a palpable impertinence and vexes him beyond endurance. His slothful soul wants to be let alone.

In other cases the roots of selfishness burrow, not in self-ease, but in self-indulgence. Some questionable practice or worldly amuse-

ment is their delight. That which is hurtful to Christian influence and offensive to Christian people is claimed as a personal privilege. All remonstrance and admonition are taken as interference with individual liberty. But we need not to enumerate the roots of selfishness, for they are many and some are long, some go down deep in the nature, some are tough, and some are gnarly. Yet they must all be utterly rooted up if we would be fruitful in ourselves.

Cast out the stones of stumbling. The mountain farmer will understand this figure. The rocks which he leaves in the field make difficult the cultivation of the soil, hinder the growth of the corn and bruise the feet of the plowman. Many an aching toe has announced that the work of "clearing up" the land was not well done. Many spiritual plantations are sterile for lack of attention to this matter. Many feeble ones are caused to stumble, some to fall, and others are bruised because of the stones of stumbling in the way. It may be a pack of cards, the ballroom, the theater, the wine-cup, or some other popular amusement. It need not be a very great sin nor a very ugly one. You may not judge its hurtfulness by the harm it does you. These things are to be judged mainly by the barren-

ness which they cause in your religious life, and as stones of stumbling to others. The meaning of Paul, speaking by the Holy Ghost, is plain: "That no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." The prophet declared a like message: "Cast up, cast up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people." Personal liberty is no becoming plea for a Christian to raise in a matter of mere personal pleasure which hurts his influence not only over sinners whom he ought to save, but over good people and endangers weak ones. "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to the weak." Adopt this principle, rather: "If meat maketh my brother to stumble I will eat no flesh for evermore that I make not my brother to stumble." That was Paul's course in a matter in which he saw no sin but which was a barrier to the conscience of others. "Sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ."

Destroy entangling and irritating briars. "Sow not among thorns." There are nettles of personal envy, jealousy, stinging nettles of impatience and irritability, and sharp thorns of hasty, harsh, and savage speech which

pierce gentle hearts and make them bleed. The running brier is to the farmer the most common and annoying variety. It is a fitting type of slanderous tales and tattling talk. The running brier grows faster, spreads further and is the most harassing pest of fallow ground. Its presence indicates a shallow and poor soil. In these respects it is typical of uncharitable speech and the character of those who use it. From a very small root of fact the running brier of tale-bearing can cover a whole community, and a very slender and harmless looking specimen has often tripped innocent people and permanently injured their reputations. Friend, if one of these briars is growing in your field, destroy it or it will destroy much good.

BREAKING THE LAND.

Land which has been so neglected and become so infested needs thorough and deep plowing. Nothing short of this will break up the old roots of evil, prepare it for good seed and insure their growth and a good harvest. Some farmers have seemed to us to do little more than tickle their lands. The subsoil is left unturned and hard. There is a danger

in this finical age that preachers will do the same sort of work. It is for our instruction in righteousness that the men who have had a fruitful ministry have been deep plowers.

The gospel plow must go deep enough to break up moral and spiritual indifference. There is but one thing more appalling than the spiritual coma into which multitudes everywhere have fallen. No tame means will wake them; over-polite, refined and conventional appeal will soothe rather than arouse. There is in all men a divinely implanted religious feeling which is to be considered, and which may be boldly appealed to. Its reasonable excitement betrays no crudeness in the method which has been used. Regeneration must go down to the very deepest spiritual sensations.

The conscience and the will must be reached and stirred up. The source of moral fertility must be reached. These do not always lie near the surface, but, in fallow ground, are likely encrusted and grown over. The beaten and sodden soil of religious neglect and sinful indulgence overlays them. The prancing steeds of pleasure and the roving herds of sinful indulgence have trodden the surface hard. It will take thorough plow-

ing to suitably prepare for seed-sowing and insure the harvest. The preacher will shock some more sensitive souls before he reaches the consciences of others. The doctrines of judgment and retribution sound harsh and unrefined to some while necessary to arouse others. Anecdotes, elocution, poetry and current events may please but will not pulverize these natures.

And deeper still—let down the plow until secret sins are found out and turned out. The farmer is glad to plow out the mice and moles before planting his potatoes. There are in the lives even of the best men forgotten and unconscious sins; there are in some men secret sins and hypocrisies which must be exposed, confessed and abandoned before they can find peace. It was not long ago when a boy came to us after we had preached a sermon on repentance, which under God had plowed a furrow in his heart, and confessed that he was guilty of a half-dozen thefts in the town, and being told his duty, went and paid for the goods he had stolen. A broken heart is a condition of salvation, as broken land is a condition of a good crop.

And deeper yet—the motives of religious acts and observances must be reached. No

work, no gift, no speech is of religious worth apart from a pure motive to prompt it. Motive colors the whole matter. It sullies or sanctifies all we do. If the springs of action are not pure the most helpful act, the largest gift is contaminated. Or, to return to our agricultural figure, motive determines the quality of the fruit which our lives produce. A yield the most bountiful and beautiful to the eye is sour to the Master's taste if it is not sweetened with a good motive.

WHAT IS GAINED BY SUCH PREPARATION.

New lands are brought under cultivation. Sometimes we have neglected to till the most fertile land. For years the farmers in one of the Eastern States cultivated the high sandy land of the pine-belt and made small crops, while the swamp lands with their great native poplars and gums were untouched by the plow and remained the home of the bear and the panther. Not many years ago some sensible fellow reasoned that land which grew trees six feet in diameter would grow corn. He made the experiment and never afterwards could he be induced to plant an acre of sand-hill. The neighbors followed his example,

and now in the lair of wild beasts great harvests grow, fifty and sixty fold more than was formerly gathered from the upland. In many individual lives there are unreclaimed talents and neglected gifts which might be turned into great fruitfulness for God and a needy world. And there is scarcely a community in which there are not men and women who are useless for the cause of Christ and whose influence is even counted a menace and, yet, who might, by reason of position in society, natural gifts, personal magnetism, or culture, become the most useful men and women in the entire community. We have observed that in most small towns and villages, as well as country neighborhoods, there are single individuals, or a small coterie of them, who, should they become positively religious, could change the moral character of the whole place. And often these are the fallow-ground sort characterized in these remarks.

Such clearing and breaking of the soil makes the work of cultivation easier. What toil and hardship a farmer has through all the long summer because the land is not cleared of all the stumps and rocks and thoroughly plowed in the spring! So have individuals and so have churches and ministers suffered

for lack of genuine work in the first stages of religious experience and soul culture. A complete work with our sins makes easy work with our graces. If the minister had made no compromises with the sins and pleasures of the young inquirer he would have had less trouble with the frolics of the young church-member.

Thorough preparation insures a more abundant crop. It is a waste of seed to throw them out on uncleared and unbroken land. The farmer practices no such folly and bad economy. He is after a harvest and he counts all labor well spent which multiplies that harvest. After all, is not fruitfulness a great end for which we spend all our anxious care and Christian labor? The motto of a distinguished Puritan was usefulness. This like a master-passion dominated his long life. His signet ring bore the device of a fruit-bearing tree. When he was dying and just as his ears were being muffled to human voices forever, his son asked him for a word to remember when he was gone, and the old man answered in a whisper, "Fruitfulness." That is an end to live for and a consolation to die with.

SOWING THE SEED



“Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? Doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and appointed barley and the rye in their place?” *The Bible.*

“Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny; destiny is eternal.” *Anon.*

PART II.—SOWING THE SEED.

Every time the farmer sends a plowman into the field he should be reminded of the words of his Master, "Go ye also into the vineyard." Every time seed are scattered over the fresh earth the sower should recall that "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Every furrow plowed and every grain planted is a symbol at once recognizable and impressive of some spiritual fact of paramount and personal importance. Among the symbolical statutes in the rotunda of the Congressional Library at Washington is one called *Religion*. It is a female figure holding a flower in her hand, seeming to teach that religious truths are revealed in nature. Again, in one of the corridors are several tympanums, among which are *Labor* and *Religion*. *Labor* represents two young men at work in the field, one removing a stump, the other overturning the soil, preparing to plant the seed. *Religion*, which is significantly next to *Labor*, shows a boy and a girl, they too in the open field, bowing before a large rough stone on which the glowing altar-fire is burning. The

two pictures, placed together as they are, hint at the close relation between labor and religion, and that the field and its symbols suggest religious thoughts and inspire religious devotion.

Our present theme takes us a stage further than our last in the process of spiritual farming. It observes the natural order. We must go beyond clearing and breaking the land. We must not only plow but

PLANT AND SOW.

“Doth the plowman plow all day?” or, more exactly, is he “always plowing?” Does he do nothing but keep the land in order? Think of a man calling himself a farmer who, though always busy, never sows a seed or plants a grain! Such a farmer would be considered a good deal greener than grass by his neighbors, and many a right hearty laugh would they have at his ignorance. And yet it is feared that there is a large class of men who as spiritual farmers never get beyond the clearing stage. They are literally cultivators of the soil—they sow no seed of good works and cultivate nothing but the soil. Whenever they work at all they are engaged in “spiritual improve-

ment." Their prayers, devotions, the preaching day and the annual revival are all looked upon as means to this end. Their intermittent religious exercise is given to "giving up what is wrong" and "getting my heart right." They spend the whole summer of their days in digging up the stumps and breaking up the land. This is a good work and necessary, but, alone, it leaves the world starving for the bread of life. Nor does their religion yield them satisfaction. The fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace," etc., but we must sow to the Spirit if we would reap of the Spirit. And preparing the soil is not sowing.

How proud some men are of their negative virtues. "I never swore an oath." "I have not taken a drink of whisky in five years." Now that is simply keeping the land cleared. It is not even breaking it up. Is a farmer proud of his plantation because it never grows grass and weeds? Is he called a successful farmer who simply keeps his field clean? Are you expecting the harvest rewards because you keep defiling sin out of your heart? Of course you cannot make a good harvest if you do not keep these things out, but neither can you make it if you do not put the seeds in. It would be a contra-

diction of the commonest law of agriculture for us to reap without sowing. "Whatsoever a man *soweth*, that shall he also reap." "He that goeth forth and weepeth *bearing precious seed* shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bearing his sheaves with him." If we bear no seeds we shall bring no sheaves. Otherwise we should contradict both nature and experience. The like has not been seen. Nature withholds the harvest from the man who withholds the seed from her.

He who would reap a large harvest must not only sow, but he must

SOW LIBERALLY.

"When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not *cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin*, etc.? He must not be too stingy with his seed, for "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." The wise spiritual farmer will sow many seed and he will "cast abroad and scatter." His charity, if it begin at home, will not end there. He is the equal friend of his poor neighbor, of State Missions, of Home Missions, and of Foreign Missions. "The field is the world."

What a gloriously expansive domain is his who would plant for a great harvest! All hearts and all continents belong to him who wants a field in which to sow righteousness. "Cast abroad" wherever you can prepare a heart or find one prepared for the incorruptible seed. Remember that every man is either a subject or an object of gospel evangelism. He is either a farmer or a field in this spiritual agriculture. He is saved, and so is become a savior, or he is a sinner in need of salvation. Wherever you find a man or can reach him through other instrumentality there pursue your vocation as a tiller of hearts. Make his life a virtue-garden. There is no pre-empted territory where you may not of right cast the precious seed. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

Ah, but the scanty sowing we do. If the world is our field and we may be growing the precious crop wherever we will, why are we so reluctant to sow? Some seem afraid that every seed that escapes their fingers is wasted. Some who trust nature cannot trust God. If they cannot keep both eyes on every gift they are afraid to sow it lest it should be thrown away. "Truly the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of

light." Some in their selfishness even eat the seed corn on which they are dependent for a future harvest. These are words worthy to be our motto: "I would lean forth and sow as far as hand can scatter my seed. Let the angels count the bundles."

"It never was loving that emptied the heart,
Or giving that emptied the purse."

SOW A VARIETY OF SEEDS.

"Cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye," etc. The "one crop" system has made a poor man of many a farmer. It has likewise impoverished many a Christian. Put forth many kinds of golden grain, "For thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that." Take a hand in every good cause.

Sow many prayers. You may not see the harvest on the day of your sowing, but this ought not in all cases to be expected. You may not always sow with skill and the harvest may sometime be long, the crop may even sometimes fail through our blunders, but it will be a good crop when you make it. Do

not stay in your sowing. "In due time we shall reap if we faint not."

Sow many kind words. Sometimes we will do well if we water them with our tears. Spoken with trembling lips and swimming eyes sometimes—

"A whisper on the tumult thrown
A transitory breath,
May raise a brother from the dust
And save a soul from death."

A bit of well-known history may illustrate the wisdom of such sowing and the joy that may come from it. In a sermon delivered in Tremont Temple, Boston, Dr. George C. Lorimer used the words, "The bird with a broken pinion never soars so high again." Hezekiah Butterworth, editor of *Youth's Companion*, heard them and forthwith wrote the poem, "The Bird with the Broken Wing." A few years later Dr. Lorimer went to Chicago as pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, and there one night while speaking he raised his finger and said, "It may be to-night there is a defaulter here." His finger happened, as some would say, to be pointed directly towards a man guilty of that sin. The man felt his guilt and resolved upon restitution. But before this

was done his crime was discovered. He confessed it and went to Joliet prison for two years. While there he one day picked up a scrap of paper from the corridor and found written upon it Mr. Butterworth's poem. This gave direction to that life already wrought upon by the spirit of God since the hour the minister pointed his finger at him in Immanuel Church. He copied the words of the poem which drew so pathetic a picture of his own maimed life. Released finally from prison, he became a faithful and earnest minister and used often to recite the poem. These are the familiar words:

"I walked through the woodland meadow,
Where the sweet rushes sing,
And found, on a bed of mosses,
A bird with a broken wing.

"I healed its wound, and each morning
It sang its old sweet strain;
But the bird with a broken pinion
Never soared as high again.

"I found a young life broken
By sin's seductive art,
And touched with a Christlike pity,
I took it to my heart.

"He lived with a noble purpose,
And struggled not in vain;
But the life that sin had stricken
Never soared as high again.

"But the bird with the broken pinion
Kept another from the snare,
And the life that sin had stricken
Raised another from despair.

"Each loss has its compensation,
There is healing from every pain,
But the bird with the broken pinion
Never soared as high again."

Before the fact of that man's salvation and his own fruitful ministry, and that poem still being repeated around the world, who can tell what shall be the harvest from the faithful words spoken by Dr. Lorimer?

Sow deeds of benevolence. Reach forth your hand and scatter generous acts of brotherly kindness and human helpfulness. Deeds are seeds with all their power of reproduction and multiplication. They are also possessed with immortality; that immortality by which the heart of things lives in resurrected life. We sow the seed which shall bear grain. When the sower of good deeds rests from his labors his works shall follow him. The deed

may be the gift of a dime or a dollar to some worthy cause. It is not lost. Trust it to God as you trust the seed to the soil. It will bring forth in its season.

“So should we live that every hour
May die as dies the natural flower—
A selfreviving thing of power;
That every thought and every deed
May hold within itself the seed
Of future good and future meed”

God and nature are great multipliers. You can count the trees in the orchard, but you cannot count the trees in the apples on the trees. Each apple contains seed enough to make an orchard and many barrels of blushing fruit. You may be able to count the grains of what you sow, but not the grains they shall make. Then, of prayers, words, deeds and gifts let us, like wise farmers, sow the waiting fields.

“Sow in the morn thy seed;
At eve hold not thy hand;
To doubt and fear give thou no heed;
Broadcast it o’er the land.

Thou canst not toil in vain,
Cold, heat, and moist and dry
Shall foster and mature the grain
For garnerers in the sky.”

STUDY ADAPTATION TO SOIL.

“Cast in the principal wheat, and the barley, and the rye in their place.” The seed must be adapted to the soil and the sowing to the season. Good seed may fail on some soils; and wheat may be sown in autumn, but cotton must be planted in spring. Disregarding the suitable place and the appropriate time to sow, the farmer may turn all of his labor to naught. And therein may the preacher and the Christian worker find a lesson. “A word in due season how good is it.” Yea, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Sometimes a little knowledge of Greek has greatly facilitated the minister in playing the fool. A young theologian can choke a whole audience of farmers on botanical terms, while the same farmers know enough about the plantation and the garden to feed the world on bread and keep it beautiful and sweet with flowers. This was a good prayer, “Lord give me learning enough that I may preach plain enough.”

There is a lesson here for parents. There is a springtime in every life. Parents, overlooking this, neglect the religious teaching of the child and then weep over the irreligious

conduct of the youth and the young man. They sow into the ears of prodigal and dissipated boys what ought to have been sown into the ears of babies, and then are discouraged because their words are not more fruitful. The springtime of seed sowing is past and the soil is too hard and too much cumbered with other things for mother's tender words to grow there. Spurgeon says: "Train trees when they are saplings, and young lads before the down is come on their chins. If you want a bulfinch to pipe, whistle to him while he is young; he will scarcely catch the tune after he has learned the wild bird's note. Begin early to teach, for children begin early to sin. Catch them young and you may hope to keep them.

"Ere your boy has reached to seven,
Teach him well the way to heaven;
Better still the work will thrive
If he learns before he's five."

CULTIVATING THE CROP



“He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread.” *The Bible.*

“I will go root away the noisome weeds, that without profit suck the soil’s fertility from wholesome flowers.” *Shakespeare.*

PART III.—CULTIVATING THE CROP.

The text states a familiar principle in agriculture, namely, that the cultivation of the crop is essential to successful farming. The honorable knights of the plowhandle and of the hoehandle would all laugh at one who, when his crop was planted, put all the plows in the shed and all the hoes in the rack, turned the horses into the pastures, discharged his laborers, and took his seat on the porch to watch the corn grow. Very early was it said, "By the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Six thousand years of experience together with the application of modern science to agriculture and horticulture have not altered this rule laid down for the guidance of our first parents as they walked out of Eden to plant their first field and sow their first garden. "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread." He that tilleth it not shall have plenty of weeds, plenty of grass, plenty of hunger.

The principle is not confined to the field in which our corn and cotton grow and the gar-

den in which our vegetables are raised but embraces our lives in which habits and virtues grow. If you are a parent, you are not allowing your children to grow up wild—that is not all parents are. You recognize the importance and responsibility of cultivating their minds, manners and morals. If their minds are neglected, they will grow rank with the weeds of error; if their manners are neglected, they will become ugly with ill behavior; if their characters are neglected, they will become foul with immoral habits. Faithful and persevering culture of the child in mind, manners and morals is the parents' hope against that ignorance which is indigenous to the soil, against errors which many enemies seek to sow in the child's life, and that impurity which corrupts it.

Is it not astonishing that, in the face of this universal principle and the many conspicuous demonstrations of it, Christian professors should expect to keep their natures pure and grow the plants of the kingdom and the fruits of righteousness while yet ignoring the means by which they are made to grow? Certainly there is no farmer but knows better and the farmer may become our teacher if we wish to know how to make a full harvest.

KEEP HOEING AND PRAYING.

"Faith Without Works is Dead."

Said Farmer Jones, in a whining tone,
To his good old neighbor Gray:
"I've worn my knees through to the bone;
But it ain't no use to pray.

"I've prayed to the Lord a thousand times
For to make that 'ere corn grow;
And why your'n beats it so and climbs,
I'd give a deal to know."

Said Farmer Gray to his neighbor Jones,
In his easy, quiet way:
"When prayers get mixed with lazy bones,
They don't make farmin' pay.

"Your weeds, I notice, are good an' tall,
In spite of all your prayers.
You may pray for corn till the heavens fall
If you don't dig up the tares.

"I mix my prayers with a little toil
Along in every row,
An' I work this mixture into the soil
Quite vig'rous, with a hoe.

"So, while I'm praying I use my hoe,
An' do my level best
To keep down the weeds along each row,
An' the Lord He does the rest.

"It's well for to pray, both night and morn,
As every farmer knows;
But the place to pray for thrifty corn
Is right between the rows.

"You must use your hands while praying, though,
If an answer you would get,
For prayer-worn knees an' a rusty hoe
Never raised a big crop yet.

"An' so I believe, my good old friend,
If you mean to win the day,
From plowing clean to the harvest end
You must hoe as well as pray."

It is a well known fact that the majority of men who are eminent in Church, State and Letters were reared in the country. Four out of every five of the presidents of the United States came from the farm and the proportion is not less for editors, authors and college presidents. It is not, we think, unlikely that this may be accounted for by the fact that the country boy became early acquainted with this elementary principle, that things grow by cultivation. He observed that as the cotton was plowed and the corn hoed they grew, and presently he grasped the relation of mind to culture and betook himself to books and schools, helping to swell the number of country boys

in our colleges and universities to eighty-five per cent of the entire enrollment in these institutions. Carrying the analogy forward, he found that weeds of evil thought and habit were choking out the virtues of his moral nature and knew that he must give more attention to the task of soul culture. So, as he had weeded out grass from the potato patch he now weeds out profanity, vulgarity and vice. There can be no doubt that the pitiful spectacle which the lives of many church-members present is due to neglect just here. How few luxurious lives among us! Where is the life that is not marred by some sin or fault or foible which is allowed to grow in it. In how many are the Christian graces choked and dwarfed! The cultivation of the Christian life is the greatest need in our churches to-day. Observe some of the

SCRIPTURE FIGURES OF SPIRITUAL LIFE,

which strengthen the claims of this work upon us. The germ of the immortal life is signified in language like this: "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever." There the spiritual life begins.

Its primordial form is a seed, and the language implies cultivation and growth. Starting from the idea of life as a seed the Scriptures abound in passages which enjoin its nurture and development. The figures are various, but the idea of nurture and growth is in them all. At one time believers are considered as that which is to be grown: "They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine." At another they are reckoned as a plantation and the Christian graces are the growing plants: "Ye are God's husbandry"—literally His field or farm. Some of the graces are named which God would grow in this field. Faith and love are among them. Writing to the Thessalonian Christians Paul says: "Your faith groweth exceedingly and the charity (love) of every one of you toward each other aboundeth." And Peter, speaking to believers at large, entreats that we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

It is a sad deception if you persuade yourself that you have attained full spiritual stature. That is an attainment never reached by any biblical saint. Paul voices the experience and the ideal of them all when he says, "Not as though I had already attained either were

already perfect; but I follow after * * * I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling." But you need not lose heart if growth seems slow. Your religious experience may be genuine, although it is not satisfactory. Your religious life and its graces may lack thriftiness because you have neglected their cultivation. If there is a grace you wish to grow, begin the nurture of the smallest root of it you find in yourself. Do not be discouraged if it does not spring full-grown at once. This would be the surest sign that it was not the right sort. Instantaneous sanctification, the sort which professes that all the graces reach perfection in one night's revival meeting, is neither so beautiful, so enduring, nor so fruitful as that of more gradual growth. It is usually a pale and sour variety. Fruit grown in the hot-house is never luscious. That which is grown in the field under the sun and shower and which ripens by the slow processes of cultivation and the seasons tastes sweeter and lasts longer. I like the sight and fragrance of hoary-headed piety which grows richer and mellower as it ripens for the harvest. Impromptu manufacture always denotes inferior goods. The glass-blower can make sparkling gems in an

instant, but it takes centuries for one of God's foundries to turn out a diamond. Nut-grass outgrows corn or cotton and grows without cultivation, the latter with it.

THE CROP MUST BE CULTIVATED.

We have no patent cultivators to advertise, no new compound which we guarantee to produce a crop as by magic. We only point out some methods used by the old-fashioned farmers.

The crop must be protected. The farmer either fences the animals in or fences them out. It will not do to let in upon his growing corn hordes of destroyers. If the hogs were allowed to root, the cows to bite, the horses to scamper and the chickens to scratch, he would not expect a crop. Even the little moles and mice are trapped and slain. And what a war he makes on the potato-bugs! Do you, now, let in troops of destroyers upon the tender plants of your spiritual life? Beastly appetites and animal passions, hungry lusts and prancing pleasures play havoc with the young graces of many lives. Penitent vows, holy resolves and spiritual aspirations have been bruised and bitten to death by them.

How much safer to put up the bars, mend the fence, and raise it high against these worldly destroyers!

Growing crops need frequent watering. There is now before Congress what is called the "Irrigation Bill," which proposes to provide water by irrigation and at the government's expense for a large area of our Western country. The land without it is arid and useless but is capable, as has been learned by experiments, of great fertility. There are many arid and useless lives needing to be refreshed. They are famishing by the cravings of natural thirst and are parched by spiritual drought; the graces are stunted for want of a spiritual irrigation promised by Him who opened up a fountain in the house of David. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believeth on me as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The appointments of the Sabbath and public worship are for the refreshing of our spiritual lives. The neglect of these has consigned many a soul to barren dryness. The old saints had a beautiful prayer for "the droppings of the sanctuary." In their accustomed places of worship their

souls were refreshed. There God came "down like rain on the mown grass as showers that water the earth."

Drainage is important in religious agriculture as in natural farming. Year after year the planter goes on ditching and tiling his land and running off the water, though he knows a dry field means a dead crop. The fool in his haste says this is folly, but the wise farmer knows the dangers to corn and cotton from drowning as well as from drought. He knows the worthlessness of land that is sodden from standing water and so opens drains and ditches and unreluctantly lets the water flow.

There is no more important lesson for the spiritual farmer to learn than this. If we make basins of our lives and try to catch and hold all the showers of blessing that fall, we cheat ourselves as well as others. Receivers must be disbursers. God deals with us on this principle: "You give and I will give: you forgive and I will forgive; you bless and I will bless." We must keep open the channels through which may flow abroad the currents of sympathy, love and benevolence, and in time of our most parched need these shall return to bless us. The fields give to the drains, the drains to the ditches, the ditches to

the rivers and the rivers to the ocean, and, after being spread over thousands of leagues, the waters are vaporized and elevated by the sun, held in the clouds, blown by the winds, and dropped in showers upon fields just when every plant is fainting with thirst. That which would have killed if it had been hoarded makes alive after it has been generously distributed.

Make channels for the streams of love,
Where they may broadly run;
And love has overflowing streams
To fill them every one.

But, if at any time we cease
Such channels to provide,
The very founts of love for us
Will soon be parched and dried.

For we must share, if we would keep
That blessing from above.
Ceasing to give, we cease to have,
Such is the law of love.

An important part of a farmer's crop is what he calls "weeding" it. This is the task of the hoe-man. Morning and noon go forth these warriors of the hoehandle to make battle against the invading army of green-coats. Ahead of the plows and behind the plows, chopping, pulling, slaying. "How the weeds do grow!" They hide themselves behind and under the potato vines and root and fortify themselves beside the cotton until it re-

quires skillful tactics to exterminate the one without destroying the other. So rapidly do they gain reinforcement and so pertinaciously do they keep up their attack that the war must be waged all summer long or the harvest will be short.

Ah, the weeds that infest our moral plantations! The tall weeds of worldliness shading the delicate plants of spirituality and grace; the vines of selfishness which choke the life so tightly that all growth and benevolence is arrested; the nettles of impatience and anger which spoil meekness and gentleness. The weeds that are not plucked up while young will seed, and multiply, and propagate. One evil habit allowed to grow often fills the life with sin and sorrow. The prayer of the little Quaker boy is a good one for us all. Standing up in meeting and folding his arms over his breast, the little six-year-old said in a clear sweet voice, but loud enough for all to hear; "I do wish the Lord would make us all gooder, and gooder, and gooder, till there is no bad left."

The farmer is repeatedly stirring the soil. When the crop begins to grow plows, harrows and cultivators are brought forth and the plowmen are told to drive. The land must

not be allowed to bake, the roots of plants must have room to grow and fresh earth must be turned to cotton and corn. The moral soil of our natures needs this frequent breaking up that they may not become hard and that the roots of moral virtues, religious principles and Christian graces may set themselves deep and strong. For this reason we should not shrink from reading such scriptures as the sixth chapter of Matthew, or the thirteen of First Corinthians, or the Third of James, nor from hearing plain and pointed sermons. The deep plowing of early spring should be followed by the close plowing of summer. That preaching which never disturbs us will never do us good.

Some crops need pruning. This is a yearly need of the orchard and the vineyard. Sometimes the corn overshoots and these shoots must be pulled off or the crop will be shortened. This sort of work is often necessary to Christian lives. Sometimes the best and most luxurious lives produce excrescences. The soil was well prepared, good seed were sown, the early stages of growth were truly beautiful and promising; for a while the most exquisitely modest graces appear; but as the young convert grows and is put forward in

religious work, and just as admiring friends are looking for the best fruit to appear, they are saddened by disappointment. Out of Christian zeal has grown the false shoot of church jealousy; spiritual fervor puts forth the shoot of spiritual pride; out of Christian conviction has grown religious bigotry; from loyalty and devotion to the church has sprung up stubbornness and a temper to rule or ruin, lead or lock all progress—the timid and devout young man has become Brother Diotrepes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, and now stands supreme censor for the church of God. The shoot is larger than the stalk and has rendered it barren. Wise spiritual farming will sacrifice these false growths which sap the life of the individual and of the church. There are times when pruning is as necessary as planting and plowing.

GOD GIVETH THE INCREASE.

Fencing, weeding and plowing—all that we can do—will be wasted labor if the crop receives no other help. How little, after all, is our part! “God giveth the increase.” Sap and soil, shower and sunshine count for more than the plow and the hoe. We can keep down

the weeds but we cannot bring up the cotton and the corn. We cannot add one inch to the stature of one stalk in all the field. That is the work of God. The most skillful artist can at best but make a picture of a flower; he may paint what he calls a rose, but it lacks the inner life and exhales no sweetness. Life is more than a product of man's device. God is its author.

But the fact that most and best of the work must be done by God is nowhere in Scripture made a ground of excuse for man's idleness; it is rather made an incentive to activity, a cause for industry, and a ground for encouragement and hope. Three interpreters handle the familiar text, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you." One of these interpreters takes the first clause and says, "The work is mine;" he relies on his moral main-strength. Another takes the last clause as his motto and says, "The work is God's;" and waits for God to do everything. A third and wiser interpreter takes the whole text and says: "I will work because God works with me." To Christ's "Without me you can do nothing," he replies with Paul's "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth

me," and with hopeful diligence carries forward his spiritual cultivation even as the farmer plows and hoes because God has sent the spring showers and the summer sun and nature becomes his co-laborer in making the crop.

REAPING THE HARVEST.



"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that we should go and bring forth fruit." *Jesus.*

"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." *Paul.*

"The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked ones; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels." *Jesus.*

"As to growth in seed and shrub, like produces like. He who sows wheat reaps wheat, not tares. He who plants a grape receives a purple cluster, not a bunch of thorns or thistles. He who sows honor shall reap confidence. * * * * Having sown self-sacrifice and love, he shall reap fame and adulation. For nature's laws are universal and inexorable—like produces like. The sheaf is simply the seed enlarged and multiplied. The sowing contains the germs of all the harvests to be reaped." *Hillis.*

PART IV.—REAPING THE HARVEST.

The three Scriptures which we have quoted deal with life's fruitage and its harvests. They stand for the three great facts related to that harvest, namely, the harvest we grow, the harvest we reap, and that harvest of which we shall be the sheaves to be reaped; or, to put it in another form, the harvest the world reaps from our sowing, the harvest we reap from it, and the harvest which the angels reap. Of what tremendous concern are each of these to us all! Combined they mark the end and aim of all our planting, all our cultivating and the object of all the heavenly fertilities. First, then, think of

THE HARVEST WE GROW FOR OTHERS.

The truth we have learned, the repentance we have experienced and exercised, the culture

we have received become evidently justified and effectual only when we have brought forth fruit. "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit." That is the end of our election and ordination, that our redeemed lives should bring forth a harvest of good for the needy and hungry world. To fail of this is to come short of the very end of our being and the purpose of our redemption. That picture of the withered figtree in the twenty-first chapter of Matthew is a sermon in silent symbol. "And when he saw a fig-tree in the way he came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only." So far as human eye could see, it was, I should think, a perfect and a promising tree. But he found *nothing thereon but leaves only*. How proudly it rustled its leaves, symbols of an empty and vain profession. We say that Jesus cursed the tree, but did He? He sought fruit and went away disappointed, saying only as He went, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever." Now the fruitless tree is disappointed and blushes, and withers, and dies, conscious that the highest end of tree-life is forever impossible to it. It had borne nothing but leaves; Jesus did not forbid it to continue bearing them. It had borne no fruit; now it shall not bear any.

He simply shut it up hereafter to the life which it had lived hitherto. The narrative does not say that He cursed it. He did no deed of violence, but only calmly sealed its fruitfulness and went His way never to give it another opportunity to feed Him in His hunger. It did not die because Jesus killed it, but it died because it would rather die than live always as it had been living and because its opportunity for any higher life had passed forever. Though we may not have hitherto lived for them, to have the noblest ends of life made forever impossible to us withers the soul. It is damned of its own remorse. Ah, the despair there is in the words, "Let him that is unholy be unholy still!" To be shut up forever to the life we have preferred for a season!

Two ideals are everywhere set up and everywhere enforced in the New Testament—*growth* and *fruitfulness*. They represent *being*—what the Christian is in himself and what he is becoming; and *doing*, the meaning of his life for others. Growth, not maturity, is the highest achievement in character possible to a Christian, and fruitfulness is the highest expression of that life. The ripest saint to whom the inspired Word is addressed is still admonished to grow. The growing life is superior

to the full grown life both in respect to itself and its benefits to others. Fruit is borne in the process of the tree's growth, never in its maturity. And fruit-bearing is the highest end toward which a tree or a man grows. The fruit of some lives is of rarer flavor than that of others, and one yields fifty and another an hundred fold, but the best thing any man ever does is to supply out of his own life nourishment and strength for other lives. And this is always done without loss to himself; for the fruit of a tree, while the best part of it, is something which it does not need for itself. Then, follow these ideals of growth and fruitfulness with unwavering eye and unfaltering step. They will lead you to the highest usefulness and nobleness attainable by man. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; *being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ; unto the glory and praise of God.*" "He that ministers seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and *increase the fruits of your righteousness.*"

THE HARVEST WE SHALL REAP.

There are fruits of our lives of which we ourselves shall eat. Our sowing and cultivating make supplies for us as well as for others. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Each word and act is a seed and each seed shall produce after its kind, whether it be good or whether it be bad, and each will multiply itself many fold. A seed is something different from a gem. A diamond is all it will ever be, but not so is the seed; its bosom aches with a harvest. The harvest will be more than the seed-corn. There will be enough to satiate us and to supply many others beside. There will be a harvest which our neighbors and our children shall reap, but one also which shall be our own. A thousand shall mourn and a thousand curse whose lives have been embittered and vexed by the evil fruits of parental sins. Many others will have the way which leads to the moral heights made hard for them by men and women whom they will never see until they stand before the judgment throne.

This harvest which comes to us as our part is a matter for us to consider. This solemn truth is something apart both from the influ-

ence of our lives upon others and of God's future judgment on our sins. With the first of these facts we have already dealt, and with the second we will deal presently. That with which we are now dealing is that which the text illuminates, that the man who sows shall from the very field he has sown reap the natural product of his deeds. Says Henry Drummond: "If it makes no impression on a man to know that God will visit his iniquities upon him, he cannot blind himself to the fact that Nature will. Do we not all know what it is to be punished by Nature for disobeying her? We have looked round the wards of a hospital, a prison or a madhouse and seen there Nature at work squaring her accounts with sin. And we knew as we looked that if no Judge sat on the throne of heaven at all, there was a Judgment there where an inexorable Nature was crying aloud for justice and carrying out her heavy sentences of violated laws." God has put these sentences in the hands of nature to be executed upon us here lest we should forget that there is a judgment at all and lose ourselves in sinful gratification. "We are always practicing," says Drummond again, "these little deceptions upon ourselves, postponing the consequences of our misdeeds as

if they were to culminate some other day about the time of death. It makes us sin with a lighter hand to run an account with retribution, as it were, and delay the reckoning time with God. But every day is a reckoning day. Every soul is a Book of Judgment and Nature as a recording angel marks there every sin. As all will be judged by the great Judge some day, all are judged by Nature now. The sin of yesterday, as a part of its penalty, has the sin of to-day. All follow us in silent retribution on our past, and go with us to the grave." And yet the fearful retributions for sin which men experience and see, as terrible as they are, are only premonitory. They are but symptoms of wrath, the twitching bodily pains which indicate the fatality of the disease and foretold death.

There are some observations to be made just here. First, each one has a choice of seed he is to sow and in that way may select the harvest he prefers to reap. Arnot discerns the true character of life. He says: "It is not a question at all whether I shall sow or not to-day; the only question to be decided is, shall I sow good seed or bad? Every man always is sowing for his own harvest in eternity either tares or wheat. According as a man soweth

so shall he also reap; he that sows to the wind of vanity shall reap the whirlwind of wrath." And whether we sow good seed or bad—whether we sin or serve God—the harvest is equally certain. Carlyle may have lacked apostolic faith, but he did not lack confidence in the law of moral fruitage in the world. He quotes, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," etc., and adds: "No blight, nor mildew, nor scorching sun, nor rain-deluge can turn that harvest into failure. Cast forth thy acts, thy words, into the ever-living, ever-working universe; it is a seed-grain that cannot die; unnoticed to-day it will be found flourishing as a Banyan grows (perhaps, alas, a Hemlock forest) after a thousand years."

THE HARVEST WHICH THE ANGELS SHALL REAP.

The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; * * * the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." That is future judgment and reward. The tares shall be gathered to be burned and the righteous shall be gathered to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father." Here is the mystery, the astonishment and the

awful solemnity of future judgment. In this life men sow words and deeds and cultivate their crop looking for the harvest, and even gather some of its first fruits. But when they have come to the end of the season, lo, they themselves are the harvest to be reaped! This Scripture marks the fact that our moral acts, thoughts, and purposes so root themselves into our characters that they become a part of us. The two have taken on a common existence, an inseparable oneness, an indistinguishable identity. Such is the nature of good and evil that they have no independent life and cannot exist apart from individual men and women. Who can conceive of sin without a sinner, or of abstract goodness? These qualities have reality only when they are wedded to personality and to that wedlock no human power can grant a divorce. Hence the reaping of good and evil is the reaping of men and women. Each individual shall be a stalk of many branches on which all he has produced of iniquity or righteousness shall ripen for that awful or glorious harvest. Every iniquity will be found clinging to some soul. Yes, it will be a part of some soul. Likewise all the fruits of good will be hanging from the boughs of the life which bore them. As the stalk is reaped

with the wheat it has borne, so shall the saint and the sinner be. John Milton recognized this truth when he said: "A good man is the ripe fruit our earth holds up to God."

"The harvest is the end of the world." The season will not cut the crop prematurely short. Every seed will be given time to burst into life, every plant will be given time to grow, to leaf, flower and fruit and the harvest to ripen before it is gathered. Every evil word and deed we have sown, every evil habit we have cultivated shall have time to do its utmost in fixing itself in our characters and in bringing forth its fullest crop. Every law of germination, growth, multiplication and propagation shall be busy with the seed we have sown when we are sleeping in the dust and can raise no hand to shorten the awful increase. When the grain is ready to be gathered the root which has borne it all will be found in our grave as the oak stands in the heart of the acorn and is fertilized by it. A few years ago we were on Roanoke island near the spot where Walter Raleigh planted his colony. We were told that there was still on the island the original stock of the scuppernong, or white grape, so abundant to-day throughout half of the Southern States. Successive

transplantings and transportations have multiplied one little vine into thousands and a vintage every year which no hand can measure. The lives of men bear a likeness to that vine, every life is a stock from which is shooting sprouts of good or evil to multiply the harvest. Who first taught another to swear? Who distilled the first sparkling glass? Who set the copy of this sin and that after which the world has been so assiduously writing these thousand years? Who furnished the seed for all the baneful sins now filling the world with evil and sorrow? What shall his harvest be? Dean Farrar has told us that "In Australia there are leagues and leagues covered and rendered useless by stubborn, gigantic, impenetrable thistles, and it is well known that all sprang from one single thistle brought over by a Scotchman and planted in his garden." Another tells us that "Mr. Jones of Wayne County, New York, the celebrated originator and propagator of wheat, put in a single grain of his best brand of wheat and after it had sprouted took it up and divided the roots; in about three weeks' time he took them up and divided again, and so on just as long as they could bear it. And when at the end of the season he reaped his crop, lo, that one grain of wheat had pro-

duced twenty-two pounds of grain! Find out how many grains in a pound and multiply it by twenty-two and you will have the power of increase in a single kernel for one brief season. Now plant that twenty-two pounds next year and so on through all the years of a natural life and try to estimate what the harvest would be." Men's sins and the evil influences of their lives multiply in their evil progeny like the Scotchman's thistle. It is an encouraging fact that God makes our good deeds and good lives to multiply unto a blessed harvest like that of the wheat.

"The harvest is the end of the world." This suggests that opportunity is given every one for repentance and reformation. Judgment is not executed speedily. But it also suggests the unalterableness of our State if we postpone a change until the harvest time is come. God gives us time to repent if we will, to sow good seed if we prefer, but when once the crop is matured it cannot be improved, modified or changed and the "end of the world" will leave no time to sow another. The dolorous cry will then be "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

"The reapers are the angels." "The Son of Man shall send forth His angels." In that

autumn of the soul a voice shall be heard saying, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come to reap; for the harvest of the world is ripe." Good seed have done their best and bad seed their worst; saints are sanctified and sinners hardened. All the stalks of the field bend under their load of ripened grain. The divine husbandman has waited patiently for the early and latter rain. Longer waiting will not improve the crop nor add one grain to the harvest. Further probation for the sinner is useless; cut him down. The multitudes of the heavenly hosts shall bear the sickle. There will be no cry of the "harvest is great and the laborers are few." The innumerable company of the white harvesters will come forth in obedience to the command of the Son of God. They are many and qualified for their tasks. With moral vision unblurred by sin, they will discern between the good and bad; obedient, swift and strong, they will thrust in the blade and will not stay until all the harvest is in. They will reap for the heavenly garner and the unquenchable fire. That which no mother, or father, or friend, or minister could be trusted to do for biased love and pity these servants, who know no law but the will of God, will do at Jesus' behest.

Friend, ponder the question of the sort of seed you are sowing, the habits which you are cultivating, and the harvest for which you have a right to look.

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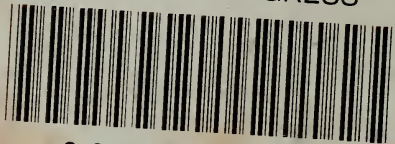
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